

and step c is executed, and, if this is not the case, step c is blocked.--

--7. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, characterised in that the identification code comprises a user identification code and/or a printer identification code.--

--8. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, characterised in that on the basis of the franking mark a second message authentication code is calculated and that this also is printed and/or the franking mark is printed in encoded form.--

--9. (Amended) A method according to Claim 1, characterised in that the set of unique bit strings is stored in a first central memory (38), used combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings are stored in a second central memory (40), franking marks printed on documents are read in, combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings which are present in the read-in franking marks are stored in a third central memory (42) and are compared to the used combinations in the second central memory.--

A3

--13. (Amended) A system according to Claim 11, characterised in that the terminal (2) is arranged to store also, besides the unique bit string and the identification code, a terminal identification code, protected with the aid of the first message authentication code and/or protected by encoding, on the information carrier (18) with memory.--

--14. (Amended) A system according to Claim 11, characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to render use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document impossible.--

--15. (Amended) A system according to Claim 11, characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to check whether the value of a counter on the information carrier (18) lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, to execute step c and to adjust the value of the counter after reading, and, if this is not the case, to block step c.--

A4

--19. (Amended) A system according to Claim 10, characterised in that the identification code comprises a user identification code and/or printer identification code.--